

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

105-X

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URGENT INFORMATION
January 6, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY A. KISSINGER
FROM: PHIL ODEEN
SUBJECT: Preliminary Assessment of December 18-29
Air Effort

DIA has provided a concise summary of Linebacker II results (Tab A).

Major damage was inflicted on the rail, telecommunications and electrical systems. Considerable damage was done to storage areas and transportation repair facilities although lucrative targets remain. Quite rapid repair of transportation and electrical generating facilities appears feasible. The highway and POL supply systems were not struck extensively.

Despite the heavy damage done during the recent strikes, the DIA assessment indicates a number of targets that were not struck. Many of these targets, however, are in Hanoi and Haiphong or near the Chinese border. In addition, many targets will require periodic restrikes to prevent rapid recovery.

Rail System. Prior to the resumption of air strikes, the rail system north of 20 degrees had almost completely recovered from the earlier damage. During Linebacker II, 19 rail targets were attacked resulting in train movement being effectively halted in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. The rail lines north to China are still operating and were little affected by the strikes. NVN has shown its capability to restore rail operations rapidly and maintenance of the current degradation will require restrikes. There are 26 authorized rail targets not yet hit, particularly bridges and yards where destruction would impede rail movements from China to the Hanoi area.

Highway System. No major strikes were directed against highways and related facilities. All roads are operational in fair to good condition, permitting diversion of priority cargo from rail to road. Only one highway-related installation (a truck park) was on the authorized

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DIA review completed.

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target list and there are several other truck parks which could be hit. The most lucrative highway target is the Dong Dang truck storage area which is very near the Chinese border.

Water Transport. Reseeding of mines was accomplished and the major ports remain closed. Some inland waterway transshipment points were damaged by B-52s. Seeding of MK-36 destructors at six waterway junctions will degrade the water transport system. DIA suggests several other areas where the seeding destructors would further degrade NVN use of waterways.

POL System: Substantial damage was done to two POL storage depots involved in distribution in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. The pipelines and associated storage areas through which POL is imported from China were not hit. The 11 key receiving depots on the main POL pipeline around Hanoi and north toward China are potential high priority targets.

Telecommunications Systems. Substantial damage was done to the radio system which was hit for the first time. There has been a partial disruption of national-level military command and control communications and a reduction in circuits available to communicate with NVN forces outside the country. Some radio broadcasting has been eliminated or forced to lower power which is affecting transmission quality. Destruction of the remaining facilities, which are now overloaded with priority tasks, is identified by DIA as a potential priority target.

Electric Power. NVN was suffering power shortages prior to the resumption of bombing, with about 60 percent of the total capacity out of operation. All four of the major power plants still in operation were hit as well as two plants on which repairs were advanced. Assessment of results is not yet complete. However, it has been determined that the Hanoi plant was severely damaged and put completely out of operation. Other plants received damage and are temporarily operating below capacity. Thus, the percentage of inoperable power capacity has been increased from 60 to 70 or 80 percent and restoration of earlier damage retarded. If all major plants were out of operation, Hanoi and Haiphong would be forced to rely entirely on small, local diesel stations and portable generators which can satisfy only about 10 percent of normal demand. Alternate transformer stations in Hanoi are identified as possible targets as well as the power plants which are still operating.

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Storage Areas. Eleven of 14 authorized storage targets were attacked. The considerable damage will slow the flow of war materials to the south and the rehabilitation effort.

Industry. Five vehicle repair facilities, five shipyards and two construction plants were hit. The most important results are eliminating the only known facility for overhaul of armored vehicles and closing the main cement plant (although damage to the cement plant was primarily to storage facilities). Most vehicle repair was, however, already taking place in the field at temporary locations. NVN had made little effort to repair such facilities damaged by earlier bombing.

Air Defense. MIG reactions were sharply reduced by repeated strikes at each MIG field. Over 20 known SAM sites have been specifically targeted in addition to continuing suppression attacks. Nevertheless, over 100 missiles per day were being launched, almost certainly by relying on the mobility of SA-2 systems. Some shortages of missiles, probably resulting from the high level of firing, have been reported.

Political/Psychological Impact. In a brief comment DIA states that there were indications that NVN anticipated new air strikes and some evacuation action began early in December. Further steps to evacuate the cities began after the bombing resumed.

The intensity of the U.S. air operations was almost certainly beyond the expectations of NVN. Morale suffered, but there is no evidence to indicate that the government will be unable to control the situation.

cc: John Holdridge
Dick Kennedy

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Preliminary Assessment of Linebacker II

18-29 December 1972



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